

## Press release

# Delhi most polluted NCAP city in FY 2024–25; Byrnihat tops March 2025 pollution rankings

**New Delhi, 8 April 2025** – The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) evaluates PM10 reductions on a financial year basis, and the analysis for FY 24–25 reveals a mixed trajectory across Indian cities. Out of the 130 cities under NCAP, 28 cities continue to lack Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS), highlighting critical infrastructure gaps in air quality monitoring. PM10 data from the remaining 102 cities with available CAAQMS data was analysed for the period 1 April, 2024 to 31 March, 2025.

Delhi recorded the highest annual average PM10 concentration (FY 24-25) at 206  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , followed by Byrnihat (200  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and Patna (180  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), all of the numbers being over three times higher than the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) of 60  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

When benchmarked against the NCAP baseline year (2017–18), PM10 levels increased in 23 cities and remained unchanged in two. The remaining 77 cities showed improvements.

Change in PM10 level with respect to NCAP baseline (FY 17-18)	Number of NCAP cities
Increase	23
No change	2
1-10% reduction	18
10-20% reduction	15
20-30% reduction	12
30-40% reduction	11
>40% reduction	21

Among the cities showing improvement, 10 cities in Uttar Pradesh recorded reductions of over 40% in PM10 levels compared to the NCAP baseline year (2017–18). Two cities each in Uttarakhand and Punjab, and one city each in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Nagaland, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, also reported similar reductions.

States with the most cities showing an increase in PM10 levels included Odisha and Maharashtra (five cities each), followed by Assam (four), Madhya Pradesh (three), and Bihar, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh (two each). Chandigarh and Andhra Pradesh had one city each with an increase.

Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) reported the largest reduction in PM10 levels at 78% compared to 2017–18, while Jalgaon (Maharashtra) recorded the highest increase at 57%. Delhi saw a 15% reduction in PM10 levels over the same period.

Since CAAQMS data was unavailable for most NCAP cities in the baseline year, comparisons for FY 24–25 have had to rely on baseline values from National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP). This mismatch in datasets introduces uncertainty and may distort the scale of reported improvements or deteriorations. The recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) [report](#) further highlighted non-compliance with Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) siting criteria for CAAQMS stations in Delhi, raising concerns about data reliability. As NCAP enters its next phase, it is critical to ensure that all CAAQMS stations are correctly sited and that future assessments are based on consistent, like-for-like datasets to maintain credibility and accuracy in reporting progress.

Manoj Kumar, Analyst at CREA, said: *‘A few Indian cities have shown notable improvement in reducing PM 10 levels, but the majority remain far from meeting the NCAP targets, and with just one year left to the deadline. Despite some progress, 91 of the 102 NCAP cities with CAAQMS data still continued to exceed the lenient national annual PM10 standard during FY 2024–25.*

*‘In recent years, NCAP assessments have typically used integrated data from CAAQMS and NAMP networks by [averaging values from both systems](#) to evaluate air quality trends. However, this approach risks misrepresenting PM10 levels, as the two systems vary significantly in measurement technique and frequency. To ensure accuracy and avoid underestimation or overestimation, it is important to assess trends using CAAQMS and NAMP data separately.’*

### **March 2025 Monthly Snapshot:**

In March 2025, 209 out of 240 cities with >80% CAAQMS data reported PM2.5 levels below India’s daily national standard of 60 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. However, only six cities met the WHO’s stricter daily safe limit of 15 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

Among NCAP cities, 14 of the 98 cities with sufficient data exceeded India’s daily PM2.5 standards, and all 98 breached the WHO guidelines. Among 142 non-NCAP cities, 136 exceeded the WHO’s daily limit and 17 crossed the national standard.

Byrnihat ranked as India’s most polluted city in March, with a monthly average PM2.5 of 160 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Other cities in the top 10 polluted list for March include Hajipur, Talcher, Patna, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Barrackpore, Muzaffarpur, and Howrah. Assam had three cities among the top 10, followed by two each from Bihar, Odisha, and Haryana, and one from Uttar Pradesh.

Bihar had the highest number of cities (7 out of 24) exceeding the national daily standard in March 2025, followed by Odisha (5 of 13) and Assam (3 of 6).



Tirupur emerged as the cleanest city with a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of just 11 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Other clean cities included Agartala, Maihar, Vrindavan, Aizawl, Tirunelveli, Bareilly, Surat, Palkalaiperur, and Damoh.

Manoj added: *'While it's encouraging to see more cities meeting India's air quality standards in March, it is important to remember that there is no safe level of PM2.5 exposure for human health, and India's standards remain far more lenient than global benchmarks. Continued efforts are essential to protect public health year-round, not just during peak pollution months.'*

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## Notes to editors

- The April Ambient Air Quality Snapshot can be found [here](#).
- Previous India monthly air quality snapshots can be found [here](#).
- Daily Winter Air Quality Dashboard: <https://ncap.energyandcleanair.org/>
- New analysis of NCAP cities' AQ data discrepancies can be found [here](#).

## About CREA

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) is an independent research organisation focused on revealing the trends, causes, and health impacts, as well as the solutions to air pollution. We use scientific data, research and evidence to support the efforts of governments, companies and campaigning organisations worldwide in their efforts to move towards clean energy and clean air. [www.energyandcleanair.org](http://www.energyandcleanair.org).